

## Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-07 ISO-00 A-01 SS-07 NSC-06 AID-01 /026 W

----- 008287

R 291110Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4422

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAMASCUS 3345

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OREP (SIKES, ROBERT L.F.), SY

SUBJECT: CODEL SIKES VIST TO DAMASCUS

1. SUMMARY: CODEL SIKES 21-HOUR AUG 27/28 VISIT TO DAMASCUS WENT SMOOTHLY DESPITE LAST-MINUTE UNAVAILABILITY OF PRES ASAD. END SUMMARY.

2. REPRESENTATIVE SIKES AND ESCORT OFFICERS MAJOR QUINLAN (USAF) AND BERNARD ENGEL (STATE/H) ARRIVED BY CAR FROM BEIRUT AT 1320, AUG 27. AMBASSADOR HOSTED DETAILED BRIEFING AND LUNCHEON FOR CODEL WITH AID, DAO, USIS, AND ECON OFFICERS ATTENDING. AS BASIC PURPOSE OF CODEL VISIT TO SYRIA WAS TO SEE CITY AND MEET WITH PRES ASAD, ONLY OTHER EVENT ON PROGRAM WAS GOOD TWO-WAY EXCHANGE BETWEEN SIKES, SOME EMBASSY STAFF, AND USIA ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING SPECIALISTS MALKOC AND OLSEN AT EVENING RECEPTION AT RESIDENCE. (SIKES SAID HE WOULD VOTE FOR AID BILL.) SIKES EXPRESSED KEEN INTEREST IN USIA-SPONSORED SEMINAR FOR SYRIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH.

3. DESPITE OUR NUMEROUS CALLS TO MFA/PROTOCOL AND ASAD'S PRIVATE SECRETARY TO OBTAIN TIME FOR SIKES/ASAD MEETING, FOLLOW-UP REMINDERS OF PREVIOUS DAY (AFTER CODEL OBEY UNABLE TO SEE ASAD) THAT PRESIDENCY HAD ENCOURAGED TO HAVE SIKES HERE EVENING OF AUG 27 MEETING, NO MEETING WAS ARRANGED. TURNED OUT THAT ASAD HAD LEFT DAMASCUS NOON AUG 27 BY HELICOPTER; SITE WAS NOT DISCLOSED BUT WAS PROBABLY HIS HOME VILLAGE OF QURDAHA NEAR LATAKIA. WE PRESSED

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HARD FOR HIGH-LEVEL SUBSTITUTE AND FINALLY GOT HOUR BEGIN-

NING AT 2030 WITH DEPPM FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND ACTING  
FONMIN MOHAMMAD HAYDAR (FONMIN KHADDAM IN LIMA). HAYDAR  
COVERED SYRIA'S POLITICAL VIEWS AND ECONOMIC SITUATION,  
AND IN PARTICULAR SARG DESIRE FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH US,  
COMMENTING ON "REMARKABLE" PROGRESS IN RAPPROCHMENT BE-  
TWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS IN PAST TWO YEARS. SIKES EN-  
COURAGED SYRIAN INTEREST IN PROCEEDING WITH PROPOSED AID ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE PROJECT AND HAYDAR RESPONDED POSITIVELY.  
SIKES ALSO GAVE SPECIFIC PLUG FOR US FIRM FOSTER CREIGHTON  
INTERNATIONAL AND ITS BID ON SPORTS CITIES TO BE BUILT IN  
DAMASCUS FOR OCTOBER 1976 PAN ARAB GAMES (FCI PRINCIPALS  
HAD SEEN HAYDAR ON AUG 26 AND THIS WAS GOOD FOLLOW-UP).  
SIKES CONCLUDED MEETING BY TAKING AMERICAN FLAG LAPEL BUT-  
TON FROM HIS LAPEL AND PRESENTING IT TO HAYDAR "AS A LITTLE  
BIT OF MY COUNTRY."

4. SIKES WAS GRACIOUS WITH US IN ACCEPTING DISAPPOINTMENT  
OF NOT MEETING ASAD. HE HAD SHORT TOUR OF DAMASCUS MORNING  
AUG 28 AND DEPARTED BY CAR FOR RETURN TO BEIRUT.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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